- Launching of Road Shows in key source markets of Europe;
- Focusing on growth of hotel infrastructure particularly budget hotels; and
- Enhancing connectivity through augmentation of air capacity and improving road infrastructure to major tourist attractions.

Packages offered by tour operators

4315. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that attractive packages offered by various foreign airlines and tour operators are likely to witness an increase in the number of Indians travelling abroad;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) its impact on domestic tourism in India; and

(d) the steps being taken to attract more and more domestic tourists to different destinations in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (c) Promotions and packages offered by foreign airlines and tour operators have resulted in increase in outbound traffic, but its impact on domestic tourism is minimal. In 2003 the outbound traffic was 5.35 million as compared to 309 million domestic tourist visits. As per provisional estimates, domestic tourist visits has further increased by approximately 20% in 2004 while outbound traffic has increased by 16%.

(d) The steps being taken to attract more domestic tourists are development of infrastructure, advertising, participation in trade-shows, dissemination of information through print media, brochures and CD ROMs, joint promotions with State Governments/Union Territories etc.

Desalination of sea water to produce potable drinking water

4316. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering seriously to develop a cost effective technology to desalinate sea water to produce potable drinking water;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) to what extent the technology used for desalination of sea water will be cost effective as compared to other methods used for producing quality drinking water?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (c) The Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance Government *inter-alia* states that to put an end to the acute drinking water shortage in the cities, especially in southern states, desalination plants will be installed all along the Coromandal Coast starting with Chennai.

In this regard specific proposals have been taken up by Department of Urban Development under Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation as well as Department of Drinking Water Supply under Ministry of Rural Development.

In comparison with the cost of water extracted and treated by conventional measures the cost of production of drinking water by desalination is relatively high. All the processes of desalination are cost intensive and are suggested only if there is no other alternate ground water or surface water based schemes could be techno-ecomically feasible.

World Bank assistance for Tank Management Programme in Karnataka

4317. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Karnataka has sought World Bank assistance to rejuvenate 700 tanks under the Community based Tank Management Programme in the backward taluks on the borders of the State;

(b) if so, the amount of World Bank assistance sought for; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to place the proposals before the World Bank?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (c) The 'Karnataka Community based Tank Management Project' is being implemented with the World Bank assistance of US $98.9 million under the agreement dated 4.6.2002.The project envisages rehabilitation of approximately 2000 tanks all over the State and is scheduled for completion by 31.1.2009.